

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 2-3, 17, 20-22, 25-28 and 33-35, now stand in the application, claims 1-2, 14-16, 18-19, 23-24 and 29-32 having been canceled, claims 3, 8, 17, 20 and 25 having been amended and new claims 33-35 having been added. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

In the Office Action, the Examiner has indicated that claims 16 and 17 contain allowable subject matter. In order to expeditiously place this case in condition for allowance, Applicants have rewritten dependent claim 16 in independent form as a new claim 33. In addition, claim 17 has been amended to depend from claim 33 and the remaining dependent claims have also been amended to depend from newly added independent claim 33. In addition, Applicants have added a new independent apparatus claim 34 which recites the corresponding allowable limitations deemed by the Examiner with respect to originally filed dependent claim 16. More particularly, newly added independent claim 34 requires means for detecting deterioration of the joint by detecting a change in electrical resistance greater than a predetermined threshold similarly as was deemed to be allowable with respect to original dependent claim 16. Finally, a new dependent claim 35 has been added which substantially corresponds to allowable method claim 17 and the remaining dependent apparatus claims have been amended to depend from the newly added independent claim 34.

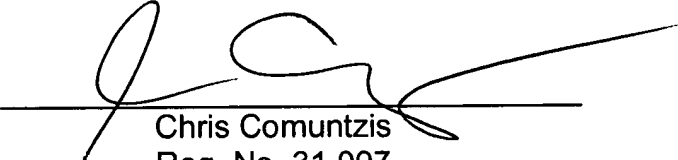
Accordingly, independent claims 33 and 34 and their respective dependent claims are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Therefore, in view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully requested that the application be reconsidered and that all of claims 3-13, 17, 20-22, 25-28 and 33-35, now standing in the application, be allowed and that the case be passed to issue. If there are any other issues remaining which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a supplemental response or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone exchange indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

By: _____


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